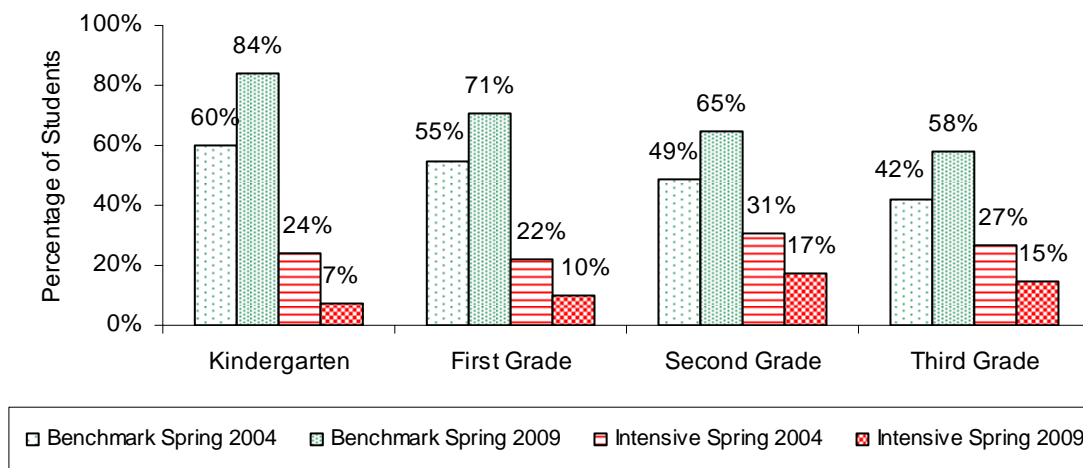


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montana Reading First was successfully implemented in at least 30 schools between January 2004 and June 2009 and touched the lives of over 11,500 students. The majority of the schools received Reading First funding for at least four years. During this time substantial progress was made in increasing the percentages of students reading at benchmark and reducing the number of struggling readers. In both cohorts, from their first year of implementation through the last year of funding, the percentage of students reading at benchmark on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) increased at all grade levels, and the percentage of students at intensive on the DIBELS decreased at all grade levels.

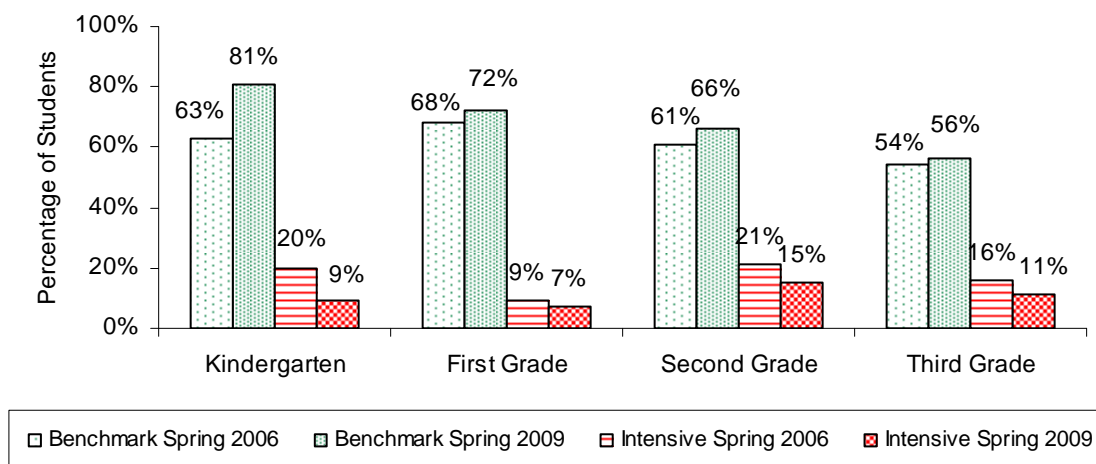
Cohort 1

Percentage of Students at Benchmark and Intensive, Spring 2004 and Spring 2009



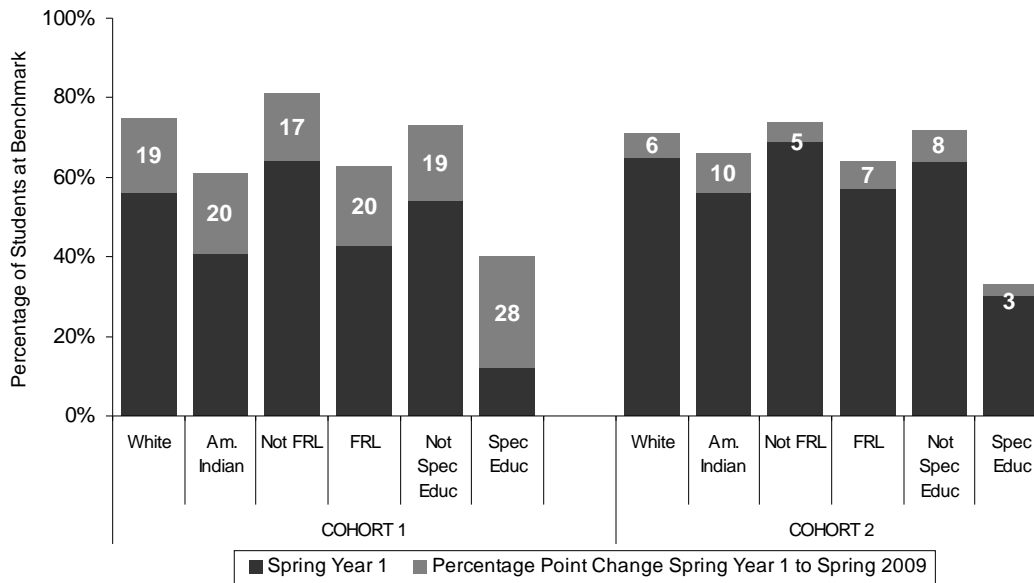
Cohort 2

Percentage of Students at Benchmark and Intensive, Spring 2004 and Spring 2009



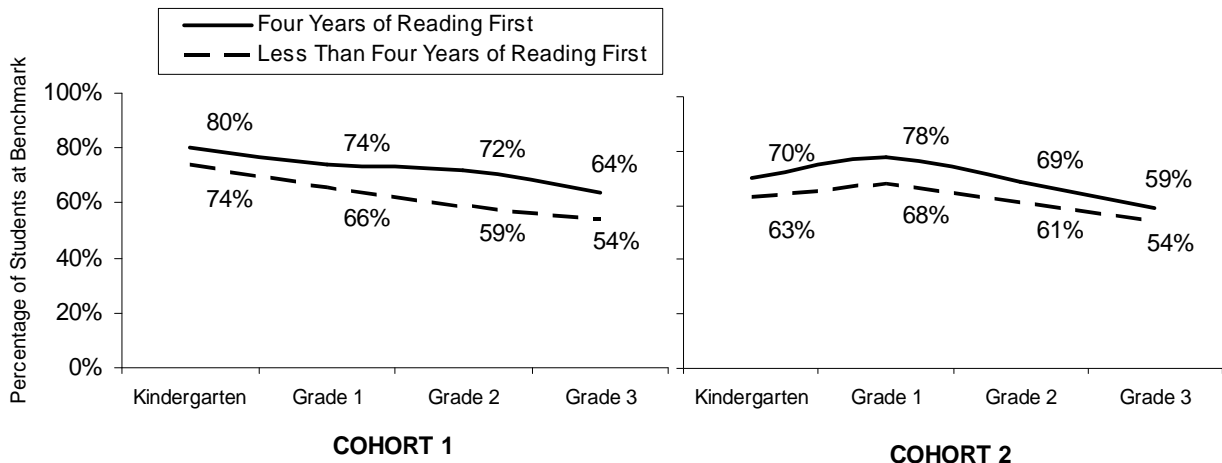
Reading First was effective for American Indian students (Am. Indian), students living in poverty (FRL), and students eligible for Special Education services (Spec Educ). There was a slight tightening of the achievement gap between American Indian and white students, and between students living in poverty and those not living in poverty, in both cohorts, from their schools' first year of participation in Reading First until their last, in spring 2009. A tightening of the achievement gap was witnessed between students eligible and ineligible for Special Education services in cohort 1 schools; the achievement gap between these students grew in cohort 2 schools. All groups experienced positive growth in the percentage of students reading at or above benchmark during this time period

Change in the Percentage of Students at Benchmark, Spring Year 1 to Spring 2009



Furthermore, analyses of intact groups of students who participated in Montana Reading First from the fall of kindergarten through spring of third grade indicate that these students performed better on the DIBELS than they might have had they received less Reading First instruction.

Percentage of Students at Benchmark, Cohort 1 and Cohort 2

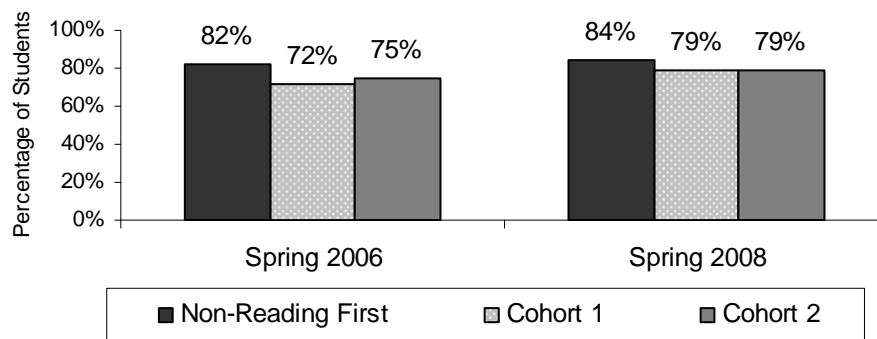


Additional analyses with this same group of intact students showed that Montana Reading First was successful at improving the reading skills of at least one-third of struggling readers in cohort 1 and at least one-half of struggling readers in cohort 2. Finally, the majority of students who ended kindergarten reading at benchmark also ended third-grade reading at benchmark.

In addition to these successes demonstrated with the DIBELS, analysis of data from the Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) in reading from the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS) showed that the achievement gap between Reading First and non-Reading First schools tightened in the third grade.

- In 2006, the achievement gap between third-grade students in non-Reading First and Reading First cohort 1 schools was 10 percentage points; in 2008, it was five percentage points.
- In 2006, the achievement gap between third-grade students in non-Reading First and Reading First cohort 2 schools was seven percentage points; in 2008, it was five percentage points.

Percentage of Student at Proficient or Advanced on CRT in Reading



The provision of small-group, targeted interventions contributed to this success. Each year, more than 2,200 Montana Reading First struggling readers were provided such interventions.

Participation in Montana Reading First had a positive impact on more than just the K–3 students in attendance in the schools. Staff members received and valued a wide array of professional development activities including Summer Institutes and Coach and Principal Meetings. These activities were consistently thought to be relevant and of high-quality and to have met the needs of instructional leaders, reading coaches, and reading teachers. In addition, personalized attention was regularly provided to staff members at each Montana Reading First school, as state reading specialists visited the sites and provided technical assistance to improve implementation and increase sustainability.

Teachers also benefited from the additional assistance from their reading coach and principal. Although not all teachers received classroom observations and feedback from these individuals with the same frequency, their input was valued.

All schools adopted a K–3, research-based core reading program. These were universally implemented, in addition to a 90-minute reading block. Systems for administering assessments and analyzing and sharing assessment data were established, and most staff members developed strong habits in using those assessment data when making decisions that affected the students in

their school. Collaborative forums—Reading Leadership Teams and grade-level teams—were created; regular meetings increased collaboration, and staff members found them to be effective and felt attending them was a good use of their time.

Participation in Reading First increased staff members' participation in reading-related professional development and collaborative forums, use of a common, research-based core reading program and a 90-minute reading block, administration of reading assessments and use of data, and ability to provide interventions to struggling readers. When Reading First funding was reduced, not all of these changes were sustained at the same levels that were witnessed while schools received full funding. Across both cohorts, the use of a core reading program, a 90-minute reading block, and progress-monitoring assessments persisted; and participation in reading-related professional development, including observations and feedback from reading coaches and principals, declined. Although the other components of Reading First continued to be implemented in both cohorts of schools, they were implemented less regularly; but the extent to which those decreases occurred varied across cohorts and schools.

Overall, a few aspects of Montana Reading First implementation met with less success. The power of Knowledge Box was appreciated by staff members, but technical difficulties with it limited its use. Study groups went by the wayside when they were no longer required. Not all schools were able to establish uninterrupted reading blocks. Still, only three schools were discontinued for non-compliance.